

right³³ angle

Summer 2001

a resource for adults working with
young people on global rights issues

positive action

- the challenge of HIV/AIDS
- China's "floating children"



Save the Children

right³³ angle

Summer 2001

rightangle is produced by Save the Children's Youth Education Programme. For comments, suggestions or feedback on **rightangle**, or to join the Youth Education Programme's mailing list, contact:

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The front cover shows HIV/AIDS peer educators at work in Cambodia.

To protect privacy, the photos used in **rightangle** do not necessarily show the actual children and young people featured in the articles. Names are sometimes also changed.

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rightangle aims to inspire adults and the young people they work with to learn about and actively promote children's rights – locally and globally. Each edition features **articles, activities and resources** around a theme linked to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – the international law that outlines the minimum standards that everyone up to 18 is entitled to.

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Features new publications aimed at young people and adults working with them.

positive action

All 54 articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) are **linked** and **interdependent**, but those that are particularly relevant to HIV/AIDS include:

young people's right to ...

**good
healthcare**

Article 24

**survive and
develop**

Article 6

**express
their opinions
and get
information**

Article 13

**have a say
in decisions that
affect them**

Article 12

**protection
against
discrimination**

Article 2

All but two countries in the world (Somalia and the USA) have ratified the UNCRC since it came into being in 1989. The Convention is **important** because it

- covers the full range of human rights for under 18s
- recognises children and young people as active citizens in their own right
- is a tool for forcing authorities to make children's rights a reality.

Save the Children believes that the UNCRC provides a solid framework for working with children and young people, enabling them to identify and take **positive action** on the rights they are **entitled** to by law.

For a full copy of the UNCRC, contact Save the Children's Youth Education Programme (see inside front cover) or visit www.crin.org

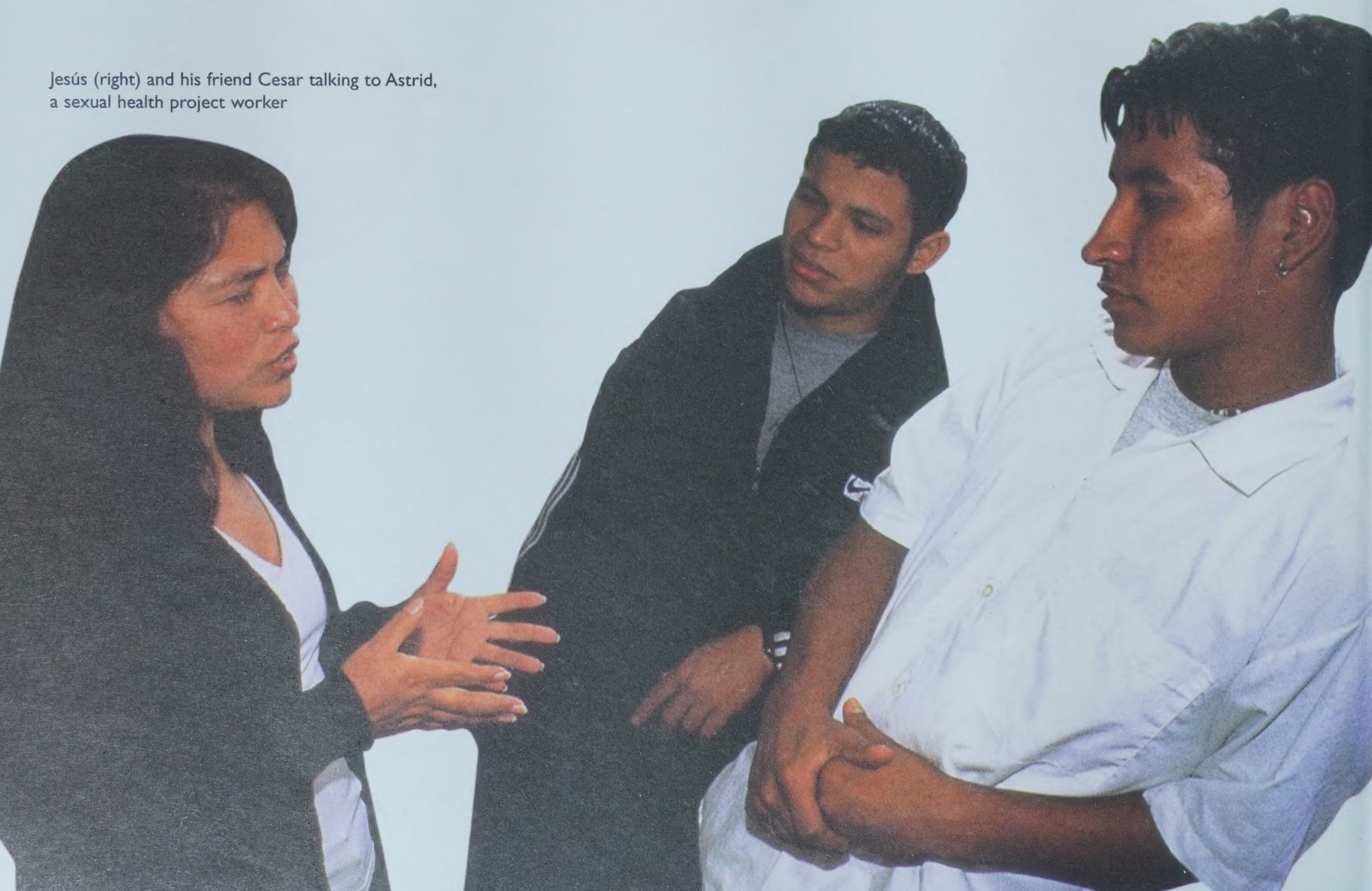
global challenge

HIV/AIDS first hit the world headlines in the 1980s. Big campaigns raised our awareness of the virus and how to stop it spreading. Since then, the issue may seem to have slipped down our agenda. But HIV never went away. While the rate of people infected slowed down in countries that could afford to deal with it, the virus spread like wildfire in places without the resources to fight back.

HIV doesn't discriminate. It hits heterosexuals as well as gay people, the young and old, men and women. Many of those infected live in poor countries. But HIV affects us all, quite simply because millions of people are going to die if we don't do something about it. Whole communities are being wiped out. The development of entire countries is under threat because the workforce is dying.

Young people between 15 and 24 are particularly affected – they form the majority of new HIV infections worldwide. The virus has already devastated millions of children's lives, either because they get ill themselves or people close to them die. The lives of millions more hang in the balance. They need proper information and education to avoid getting HIV. Others need support when their family and friends get ill and die. Those infected need proper healthcare and drugs so they can live longer and in less pain. Just like everyone else, they have human rights. Protecting them is a challenge for us all.

Jesús (right) and his friend Cesar talking to Astrid, a sexual health project worker





tell it like it is

talking point

HIV and AIDS can be difficult to talk about. Both adults and young people may feel embarrassed to even raise the subject, let alone ask questions and discuss how to avoid it.

Training young people as peer educators can be a great way to tackle tricky subjects like sexual health. Young people are ready-made experts in communicating with people their own age, and often know how to reach those who are marginalised or excluded in some way. Peer education can also be an empowering experience because it lets young people take control over their own learning.

case study

Jesús is a peer educator in La Victoria, one of the poorest districts of Perú's capital, Lima. The area is notorious for its crime, violence and high rate of teenage pregnancies.

"My friends didn't know anything about HIV and AIDS, and they were having unprotected sex. They had no one to talk to. They didn't trust the teachers, but they felt they could trust me. I started off by talking about football, and then I started giving advice about safe sex. I gave out leaflets to my schoolmates, and that's how boys in other years got to know I was involved in the awareness programme. They started coming to me for advice.

"I feel lucky, because I've learned about HIV and AIDS. I've learned to talk to people in their own language. More young people are using condoms and practising safe sex now."

what Save the Children is doing

We helped train Jesús and other students at his school to educate their friends and schoolmates about sexual health and HIV/AIDS. We have also given support to health centres and drop-in centres in Lima, where young people can talk about their concerns and get information and advice about how to protect themselves.

Purpose

To look at designing leaflets as a way of discussing HIV/AIDS issues with other young people.

Process

Brainstorm different ways of communicating a message – eg, adverts, drama, songs, writing etc. Tell your group that the Perú peer educators use leaflets to spread awareness about HIV/AIDS to other young people. Discuss why leaflets can be a good way of passing on information. What are some of the disadvantages?

Ask your group how they get information about HIV/AIDS. Encourage them to create their own leaflet for raising awareness about the issue among other young people. Remind them that they have a right to express their ideas and get information, and point out that creating accessible information for others is a good way of claiming both their own and supporting others' rights.

Remember that how the leaflet looks will have a big influence on who reads it and how they use it. Encourage the group to think about:

- their audience
- what they want people to do after reading the leaflet
- how to make sure it will be read
- how to make it look good
- their key message
- possible illustrations
- the balance between words and illustrations
- the shape and size of the leaflet.

Using the rights listed on page 1 and the information on pages 4 and 5, try producing different texts for the leaflet and some rough drafts of how you want it to look. How does the group want to develop this work? Could you test your leaflets out on other young people? (Also see page 11 for an example of how young people can use drama to raise awareness.)

what is HIV?

HIV stands for **Human Immuno-deficiency Virus**. People who become infected are called HIV-positive. HIV ruins the body's natural ability to protect itself from illnesses that it could have coped with before.

and what's AIDS?

AIDS stands for **Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome**. Acquired means that you have to get it somehow – it can't be passed on in your genes. Immune means that it affects the part of your body that protects you from diseases – the immune system. Deficiency means that the immune system is not working properly. Syndrome means that it can cause several different illnesses or symptoms – AIDS isn't just one single disease.

where does HIV come from?

Many scientists currently believe that the virus crossed over into humans from monkeys, possibly chimpanzees, in Central Africa sometime between 1920 and 1935. Some think that this happened through polio vaccines used in Central Africa in the 1950s. The truth is that **nobody really knows for sure**.

facts of life

who can get it?

Anyone can get HIV. However, some people are more at risk than others depending on how and where they live, such as people in countries with high infection rates, injection drug users or people who practise unsafe sex. Females are more vulnerable to infection than males – partly because of how women's bodies work but also because they often have less power in society and less say in relationships. Tackling sexual inequality between men and women and taking equal responsibility for safe sex are important ways to help stop HIV.

how does HIV spread?

The virus spreads from one person to another **through bodily fluids** like blood, semen and mothers' milk. It can be sexually transmitted, as well as passed on by drug users who share needles. It can't be passed on through everyday social contact – you can't get it from toilet seats, sharing cups and cutlery, touching someone or from mosquito bites.



Dinh Thai Thuy Truong, a peer educator on HIV/AIDS issues in Vietnam

how do people know they have it?

There is **no such thing as an AIDS test**, but it is possible to find out whether someone's body has started trying to protect itself from the HIV virus by producing antibodies. An HIV-positive person may be free of symptoms for 6–10 years or even longer, and look and feel perfectly healthy.

what can be done about it?

Teaching people how to avoid HIV is the best way to stop it spreading. And education needs to start early. Teaching young people about how HIV/AIDS is transmitted, and about how to make their own decisions, helps them to stay safe. Research shows that educating people at an early age does not encourage them to start having sex earlier.

but aren't drugs available?

People living with HIV can take a combination of drugs known as anti-retrovirals – but **only if they or their government can afford them**. Most HIV-positive people in poorer countries don't even know they have the virus, and getting hold of expensive drugs is a distant dream if you can't even get good basic healthcare. Drugs are more easily available in richer countries, but they don't completely kill the virus. Taking them can involve “cocktails” of many different pills every day, often causing painful side-effects.

so how do you avoid it?

The quick answer is to **not have sex** at all, or always **use a condom** and to **avoid sharing needles**. But this is often easier said than done, and it is therefore very important to teach people how to take good care of themselves – how to say no to sex, where to get contraceptives and advice, etc. Young people have the right to get information and express their opinions, and to get good healthcare and protection from abuse. Learning how to claim these rights for themselves is a big step in the right direction.



a question of health

Purpose

To raise awareness of facts relating to HIV/AIDS.

Process

Photocopy the facts on these pages and cut them up into cards, some with just questions on them and others with both the questions and the factual answers. Split your group up into smaller groups or pairs. Rotate the question cards around the groups and give them a couple of minutes to discuss their answers before the cards are rotated again. Once all the question cards have gone round every group, rotate the answer cards. Give each group time to read the card and discuss the factual answers. Do the answers surprise them? Why? Is there anything in particular they think all young people should be aware of?

Continue the discussion in a larger group. Emphasise that learning about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections is the best way to stay healthy.

LINKS

Introsheet on HIV/AIDS (see back cover). To order free copies call 020 7716 2369 or e-mail yep@scfuk.org.uk

Health for all?, rightangle No. 31, features articles, activities and links around global health issues. See above for how to order free copies.

HIV in the UK

It's not just about sex

Young people have the right to access information. Making this right a reality is key to enabling young people to protect themselves against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

"Ignorance is not bliss," says Keith Winestein from the National AIDS Trust (NAT), the UK's leading AIDS advocacy organisation. "Without proper information you can't make proper decisions." He is adamant that knowing the facts about HIV is vitally important to all young people in the UK.

An increasing number of young heterosexual people in the UK are currently having unsafe sex. This is obvious not only because this country still has the highest rates of teenage pregnancies in Western Europe, but also because of rising numbers of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as gonorrhoea, herpes and chlamydia among young people.

HIV infections are also rising. An average of 3,000 people in the UK have become infected every year over the last decade. Yet, according to a recent NAT survey, most young people in the UK don't think of the virus as anything to do with them. They often don't know anyone living with it, or they simply feel "immortal".

"School-based sex education that includes HIV and AIDS is crucial," says Keith. Despite recent improvements in this area, problems remain. "Young people say their sex education is 'too little, too late and too biological', and many professionals are confused about what they are allowed to teach and generally lack sex education training." Fortunately, there are various indirect ways of approaching the tricky subject of HIV/AIDS. "It's not just about sex," says Keith. "It's about building up young people's self-esteem, learning negotiating skills like how to turn down sexual advances and recognise situations which may prove risky or violent, and how to make sound decisions about what they want to do with their lives."

Human rights approaches to HIV/AIDS can explore issues of respect, compassion and support for people living with the virus, and for the many thousands who care for them. "There are young people out there today in the UK who are looking after sick relatives and they need support because they're hidden away."

did you know...?

Education about HIV/AIDS and STIs is compulsory in secondary schools. According to the National AIDS Trust, some of the most important HIV-related skills young people can learn are:

- **How to make sound decisions** about relationships and sexual intercourse, and stand up for those decisions.
- **How to identify one's own reasons** for resisting pressure for unwanted sex or drugs.
- **How and where to ask for support** and have access to youth friendly services.
- **How to negotiate** protected sex and other forms of safer sex when ready for sexual relationships.

TO FIND OUT MORE VISIT www.worldaidsday.org/difference/educate_skills.cfm

LINKS

Visit www.nat.org.uk for great links and more information.

Visit www.hify-uk.com to find out more about Health Initiatives for Youth (UK).

For free, confidential HIV/AIDS and sexual health advice call the National AIDS helpline on 0800 567 123 (24 hrs).

Visit www.avert.org.uk/hivquiz.htm for a quiz on HIV/AIDS, personal stories, statistics and much more.

my story

Clint Walters is 21 and from Oxford

"When I was 16, I decided to explore the big wide world outside school and away from my family. I would go drinking and clubbing and began to experiment with sex with both men and women, occasionally using condoms. It was fun and I felt it was a kind of love and another way of being close to someone.

"Before my final year of A-levels, I started to become sick. I lost weight and had problems breathing. They thought I had cancer. They asked me about my sex life, which I felt ashamed of and was too personal to discuss. They told me I was at little risk and that an HIV test was just a way of eliminating possible illnesses.

"On July 28 1997, the doctor told me that I was HIV-positive. I was 17 years old. I had never been more scared.

"My motto has always been you have one option in life – you either sink or swim. I decided to swim – quitting was never an option. Knowledge was my only key to power.

"I went back to school and faced my second year of A-levels. But my priorities had changed. My grades weren't as important as me dealing with my health and HIV. I also started to learn more about the virus. I wanted to try to lead a normal life. I didn't want to think about being HIV positive all the time.

"I got really stressed and ended up back in hospital. My teacher gave me strength and made me see I had come too far to quit. I sat all my exams and passed. Later I went to the USA where I started HIV treatment, and gained skills in working with, supporting, and educating other young people about HIV. HIV is not just about putting on

a condom. If it was, then no one would be infected. It's also about why we put ourselves at risk, lack of knowledge, not talking about it, feeling ashamed, looking for some kind of love and not caring enough about ourselves.

"As strange as it sounds, I wouldn't change being HIV positive. It has made me grow up and live life to the full. I have learnt to be stronger and trust myself in all my decisions. My story is not unique. The statistics show that young people are being infected. What they do not show is the amount of pain, suffering,

lack of support and education that many people with a positive diagnosis experience.

"HIV-positive youth need support to make better decisions. HIV-negative youth need to learn how to stay that way and continue to make healthy decisions. Luck is not enough."

CLINT RUNS AN ORGANISATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE CONCERNED ABOUT HIV/AIDS. TO GET INVOLVED OR FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT HIFY-UK, 22 WILLES DEN HIGH ROAD, LONDON NW10 2QD TEL 020 8830 4547 FAX 020 8451 4533 E-MAIL london@hify.fsnet.co.uk



CLINT WALTERS

double impact

Although the way HIV spreads and how it affects people varies from place to place, it is always dangerous and destructive. And it doesn't just affect people who are HIV-positive themselves – it also makes life very difficult for the people who love and depend on them.

More than 13 million children under 15 have already lost their mother or both parents to AIDS. Over the next ten years, this number could reach 44 million. If we also count all the young people aged between 15 to 18 who have lost their father or both parents to AIDS or another illness, in 2010 there could be as many orphans in the world as there are people alive today in the USA – up to 250 million.

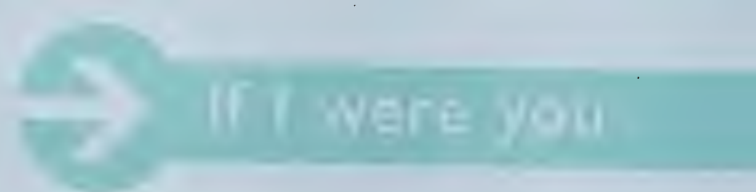
serious facts

- Around 33 million adults and 1.3 million children under 15 are living with HIV/AIDS worldwide.
- By the end of 1999, around 15 million adults and 3.8 million children under 15 had died since the start of the AIDS epidemic. This number is expected to double over the next decade.
- In 1999, 620,000 children under 15 became infected with HIV – more than one child every minute.
- About half of the people newly infected with HIV are aged between 15 and 24.
- In the countries most affected by HIV/AIDS, up to one third of all young men and women will die of AIDS. In some areas up to two thirds will die.

Two girls playing at a Save the Children HIV/AIDS project in Uganda



living with HIV



case studies

Catherine is ten years old and HIV-positive. She lives in a crowded slum area of Kampala, the capital of Uganda. Her father and brother have died of an AIDS-related illness, and her mother is HIV-positive.

"I like my sisters because we play together, and whenever I am sick they pray for me," Catherine says. "I don't like children losing their mothers, because when their mothers die these children suffer. I hate seeing children's dead bodies because they make me sad. When my brother died, many people came to our house and they were crying. He was very young.

"When I grow up I want to be a nurse, because they help children when they are sick. I also like helping children who are sick or with problems. I will also earn much money and build a big house for my mother and sisters, and will plant many flowers around it."

Loan is a 15-year-old girl living in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Her father is HIV-positive.

"My father became infected with HIV from drug injecting, and he often falls ill – sometimes so seriously. I don't want to see him die. He isn't able to work because of his health, but he is involved in an AIDS prevention group to help other people. I'm glad, as that is one productive way he can spend his time now.

"My mother, sisters, brother, grandmother and I – we all live with him. Whatever happens, he must be with us as he is part of us. My mother says, 'What will be, will be.' The day will come anyway, and worry will not help at all. We have many other daily concerns – money for our food, clothes and medicines for my father."

Purpose

To think about the impact HIV/AIDS can have on children and young people and to consider our own responses to the people affected.

Process

Share Catherine's and/or Loan's story with your group. Discuss how they would be treated if they were members of this group. How would people behave towards them? Would they be treated differently, and if so – how? Discuss what types of discrimination the girls and their families might experience, and from whom, in what situations and why? Remind your group that young people have a right not to be discriminated against or treated badly for any reason or in any situation.

The group could also try to explore how the girls' lives have changed because of HIV through role play, art, writing or simply trying to imagine the time when they became affected by the virus and how things have changed for them since. What does the future hold for Loan and Catherine? What could be done to improve their situations?

what Save the Children is doing

- In Uganda we work to increase understanding of HIV/AIDS, for example, by distributing sex education information to schools, training youth groups to use theatre to raise awareness and training school students to discuss safer sex with fellow pupils.
- In Vietnam we support young people and their families affected by HIV/AIDS and train people to provide non-judgemental, community-based counselling and care. We also support young people doing peer education around HIV/AIDS in schools and the community.

LINKS

Children Affected by HIV/AIDS: Rights and Responses in the Developing World, Save the Children. To order call 01752 202 301 or e-mail orders@plymbridge.com price £8.95 plus p&p.

Join UNICEF's campaign on HIV/AIDS at www.unicef.org.uk/breakthesilence

Visit www.unaids.org or www.aidsmap.com for up-to-date information on HIV in the UK and around the globe.

Visit www.actionaid.org/photoessay/hiv.html to see *A long day of dying*, an on-line photo essay on HIV and AIDS in Malawi.

the poverty trap

Ending poverty is **crucial** to stopping the spread of HIV. At the moment, many poorer countries are forced to pay off huge debts to richer nations instead of investing in better education and healthcare.

Every day, around 16,000 people around the world become infected with HIV. It is no coincidence that 95 per cent of them live in places with the biggest debt problems – particularly sub-Saharan Africa, but also Asia and Eastern Europe.

The spread of HIV/AIDS today represents a massive threat, not just to the life chances of individual human beings, but to the futures of whole communities and countries. The virus is destroying many of the positive changes that have taken place in developing countries over the last 20 years. People are starting to die at an earlier age than before, and many of the adults who make up the biggest and most skilled part of the workforce are dying. This

has devastating consequences for a country's economy – because who will take over when there simply aren't enough healthy and skilled adults left?

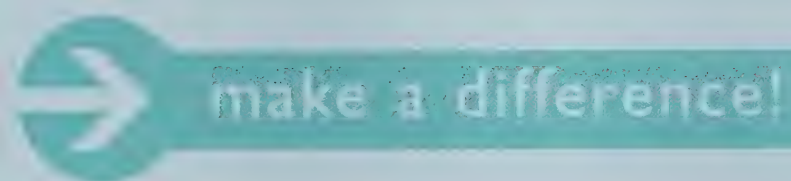
HIV/AIDS also has a long-term impact on children and young people's opportunity to develop their skills and talents. More and more children are forced to take over the duties of adults who have either died or are too weak to manage. It can be impossible for young people running whole households and taking care of other children to go to school or even work.

Without an education, children's chances of escaping poverty are dramatically reduced. In order to survive they may have to do

dangerous or harmful work, or become exploited as sex workers. Not having a school to go to can also mean that they miss out on support and vital information that can help them avoid HIV. Even those who are able to go to school may have their chances of an education ruined by HIV, simply because there aren't enough teachers left to run classes.

HIV/AIDS is one of the biggest development challenges facing the world today. A crucial way that richer countries can help poorer countries fight the virus and escape the poverty trap is to drop the debt in favour of better healthcare and education for the millions who otherwise face a bleak future.

Southern Africa is the region most heavily affected by HIV and AIDS in the world. In Africa as a whole, 23 million people – equivalent to almost half the UK population – are living with HIV/AIDS, including one million children aged under 15.



Purpose

To enable young people in the UK to take action on the issues raised in this edition of **rightangle** by encouraging them to exercise their rights to have a say and express their opinions, and to stand up for other people's rights.

Process

Write a letter to your local MP or the Department for International Development to voice your concerns and ask how the UK Government is helping internationally to combat the

virus (visit www.dfid.gov.uk, e-mail enquiry@dfid.gov.uk or write to The Secretary of State for International Development, 94 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 5JL). Why not send a copy of the letter to a local or national newspaper, or write an article about the HIV/AIDS problem? To get actively involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS, try out the links (see box) and on previous pages.

LINKS

Find out how YOU can make a difference by visiting www.worldaidsday.org

Want to help get the debt dropped? Visit www.jubilee2000.org

Campaign to get cheaper drugs for people living with HIV/AIDS by visiting www.oxfam.org.uk/e-campaigns/cut.html

survival skills

With only few resources to hand, young people can help themselves and others avoid HIV.

case study

Natnael, 20, comes from Dessie town in northern Ethiopia. He is a member of the Abyssinia Reproductive Health and Art Club – a group of about 30 young people trained in HIV/AIDS education by Save the Children, and in drama skills and media awareness by the local government. Through plays, songs, puppet shows, radio dramas and video, they are spreading the message about HIV/AIDS throughout the local area – particularly among other young people.

"In Ethiopia HIV/AIDS is a big problem, especially for young people. But people don't know much about it, and that's why the problem increases every year. There are also a lot of people who know they are HIV-positive, but who still have unsafe sex.

"Sometimes people have strange beliefs about HIV. For example, some people think that schoolchildren don't have HIV or that it can be transmitted by touching someone. In the club we are trying to show both children and adults – especially people in rural areas – about the dangers of HIV/AIDS. The puppet shows are especially good for children, because they are attracted by the puppets, and they can understand the messages. Some people even cry about them. But when they go back home they don't practise what they've seen. They forget all about it.

"I think the answer is for children to have open discussions with their parents and brothers and sisters about HIV/AIDS. Bars and nightclubs should also put up posters about HIV/AIDS, so that people can see them while they are drinking or dancing.

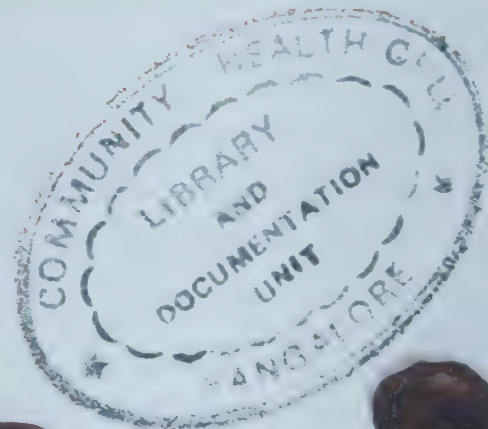
"Being part of the club has had a big impact on me. Before I was frightened of HIV/AIDS, but now I know that it is just one of many diseases, and if I avoid AIDS, then it isn't going to come to me. About a year-and-a-half ago I fell in love with a girl. But after I joined this group, I learned a lot about HIV/AIDS, and even though I loved her very much, after the training I chose not to have sex with her. I'm very confident about HIV/AIDS now, and I know that I won't get it."

Young people from Dessie in Ethiopia with the puppets they use to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS.



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worldwide voices

Things happen when young people from all over the world come together to discuss how children's lives could be improved. Tom Burke, 16, from Plymouth, reports from an important meeting in New York.

A decade ago, presidents, prime ministers and heads of state from around the world met to discuss children. At this meeting, governments promised to give every child a better life and a promising future. Fresh in their minds was the brand new United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which outlines children's rights on anything from expressing yourself to having the right to play.

But what has happened since? What has changed in children's lives? Do they really have a better life and a more promising future?

In September, another meeting – called the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children – will aim to answer these questions and see what more can be done for the world's young people. I was able to go to New York in February for the second of three meetings in the run up to this big event to discuss what has happened so far, and try to get governments to make stronger commitments to improving children's lives.

I was just one of many children and young people making their voices heard. Each came with their own ideas, views and opinions. There were very big disagreements among the young people about the issues that were being discussed. But I believe that this was a good thing, because it showed everyone that young people could form their own opinions and, as a result, could disagree with each other. The only thing missing was the right atmosphere for listening to their voices effectively.

Children and young people from all over the world will meet again in June to prepare for September, when governments will be signing up to a new plan to change children's lives over the next ten years. Provisionally called "A World fit for Children", it will outline what countries have agreed to do and when they will do it by. If their plan works, the world might be a very different, and much better place for children and young people in ten years' time.

The United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children will be a major three day event, lasting from 19 to 21 September. It will be a unique opportunity to change the way young people are seen and treated. The world will be listening in September 2001, so check out the links section below to make sure your voice is heard!

LINKS: UN SPECIAL SESSION

A new force for change called The Global Movement for Children is emerging. It will fight for children's rights around the world through participation, action and accountability. Find out more and vote "yes" for children at www.gmfc.org

Learn more about the UN Special Session on Children and how to get involved at www.savethechildren.org.uk, contact Duncan Little on 020 7703 5400 ext 2867 or e-mail d.little@scful.org.uk

For official UN documents visit www.unicef.org/specialsession

LINKS: HAVING YOUR SAY

Wise Up on Having Your Say is a new, handy advice booklet outlining how young people can make a reality of their right to have a say. To order free copies e-mail yep@scful.org.uk or call 020 7716 2369.

rightangle No. 32, *Raise Your Voice*, focuses on practical, best practice examples of young people's participation around the globe. See above for how to order free copies or visit www.savethechildren.org.uk/rightangle

reality check

I often toddle off to far flung parts of the country to listen to people speaking about youth participation. I always come back brimming with enthusiasm, dying to get it happening in my patch. Then reality hits.

I work as Co-ordinator for Devon Youth Council, which for seven years has tried to bring the views of young people in Devon to decision-makers. Young people need to be involved in decisions made at every level – in schools, colleges and youth clubs, as well as the county and district councils.

For the last seven months I've been trying to find out how young people can really and truly be involved in Devon. I have come to the conclusion that my job is impossible.

Involving young people in decision-making can't be done by giving me a job description saying it's up to me to do it.

Youth participation needs to be **integrated** into the way decisions are made. It is not an add-on, an after-thought or something you do to look good. Decision-makers seem to lay the blame on young people for not getting involved in politics, but frankly I don't blame them for their apathy. If decision-makers want young people to get involved, then it is **their responsibility** to make sure it happens. They should ensure that young people understand how the system works and how their lives are affected by adults' decisions. They should set up and support mechanisms for young people

to have their say. If decision-makers don't want to listen to young people, there's no point in pretending and doing it tokenistically.

Devon Youth Council was recently invited to speak at a local event which was consulting the public about a matter entirely to do with young people. We were the only young people there and the only people to get shouted down.

My advice to decision-makers would be don't foster frustrated employees like me. You should go to the conferences about involving young people too.

CLARE GOLDSWORTHY

Tom Burke and Clare Goldsworthy led workshops at one of the Local and Vocal conferences on young people's involvement in local decision-making, organised by Save the Children and the National Youth Agency in January this year. To find out more or to order copies of the launch publication, e-mail yep@scfuk.org.uk or call 020 7716 2369.

Are you a young person with something to say?

E-mail your suggestions to yep@scfuk.org.uk, call 020 7716 2253 or write to the Editor (for our address see p.17)



Have your say!

on the move

About a third of China's 1.3 billion inhabitants are under the age of 18. What is life like for them?



Fact file

- **Between two and five million children under 18 are currently living as migrants within China, with or without their parents.**
- **The Chinese government estimates that there are between 150 and 200,000 "floating" children in China.**
- **60 per cent of children abandoned by their parents are disabled. More than 80 per cent are girls.**

Everyday life in China has changed dramatically since economic reforms were introduced in 1978. Cities have become magnets for people seeking work in new industries and to escape countryside poverty. The "one child" policy, designed to keep population numbers down, has turned a society of large families into one of smaller units with more older people and fewer children – often called "little Emperors". The pride and joy of parents who have just one child, they often grow up under heavy pressure to succeed at school and work.

Chinese children and young people also face the challenge of surviving in a quickly changing society, where the gaps between rich and poor are growing. There isn't always a safety net in place to catch those who can't manage on their own. One result has been what the Chinese call "floating children", or street children. Having left home because of poverty, abuse or pressure to do well at school, thousands of children travel sometimes massive distances to earn a little money from selling flowers, singing, or collecting bottles on the city streets. Others fall victim to adult "traffickers" who force them into crime and sexual exploitation in China or abroad.

Responding to the needs of so many children, living in such different situations and spread over an enormous geographical area is extremely difficult and presents a huge challenge to the government. Local government agencies have been developing services through establishing 100 "social protection

centres" where children and young people picked up from the streets can be cared for until they are sent home.

But many either don't have a home to go to or refuse to stay and soon bounce back to life on the streets. The idea that home isn't necessarily the best place for children to be is quite radical in a country which is just beginning to establish a care system. The country's social workers are having to learn how to develop both training and policies to cope with a whole new range of social problems.

Raising awareness of children's rights in local communities, working with parents and encouraging children's participation is crucial to stopping children from leaving home. Save the Children works closely with local authorities in China to help understand why children run away, to explore ways of preventing this from happening, and to find proper solutions to their problems.

As in many other countries, there is still a long way to go before children and young people in China can have their own say and participate in making decisions about issues that affect them. Yet there is no reason why they shouldn't one day end up running the social protection centres that the "floating children" currently only pass through.



home and away

Purpose

To explore some similarities and differences between children and young people's lives in the UK and China.

Process

Discuss the term “floating children”. What does it mean? Who could it apply to in the UK? This may trigger a discussion about why young people run away from home, and about homelessness. Share your ideas about other ways in which young people in the UK can be “vulnerable” –

like young people who are in care, who are excluded from school, not in training or employment, seeking asylum, or who have attended many different schools. Discuss the term “vulnerable” and brainstorm factors that make the UK's “floating” children vulnerable. What changes would make children and young people less vulnerable in the UK and/or China? Look at the rights on page 1 and discuss why protecting vulnerable young people is important.

what Save the Children is doing

- we work with the Ministry of Civil Affairs to improve the lives of children in care
- we developed China's first family-style small group home for orphans
- we are trying to find alternatives to putting young offenders in prison
- we support education about rights and awareness of the law in schools

A child from a migrant family waiting at a train station in Kunming, Yunnan Province



highlighting good projects, events, links & opportunities

youth forum

get **rightonline!**

Save the Children's brand **new webpages** for young people are packed with useful stuff on anything from child soldiers to world debt, advice about rights at work, great links and opportunities for action.

VISIT www.savethechildren.org.uk/rightonline

London **Black Youth** Network

In September 2000, Theraze Angus and Abdi Ahmed received a Saying Power Millennium Award, supported by Save the Children and the Millennium Commission. Already members of the National Black Youth Forum, Theraze and Abdi are currently setting up a regional group for young people of **Asian, African and Caribbean** heritage in London aged between 14 and 24, called the London Black Youth Network (LBYN). LBYN aims to increase young black Londoners' participation in society as full and equal citizens, to ensure that all London authorities use the Black Youth Charter when developing policies, and to set up a database of Achieving Black Young People.

TO FIND OUT MORE OR GET INVOLVED, E-MAIL: lbyn_2000@yahoo.co.uk
CALL THERAZE ANGUS ON 020 7582 1990 OR 07944 048683 IF YOU LIVE IN
SOUTH LONDON, OR ABDI AHMED ON 020 7278 5635 OR 07940 361094 IF YOU
LIVE NORTH OF THE RIVER

drugs debate

On 30 June 2001, the Durham Children & Young People's Council will host a drugs awareness debate looking at **myths and taboos** surrounding drugs issues. While young people will make up the audience, speakers will include representatives from the police, the Home Office, the local health authority and youth workers. Young people from the Newcastle bureau of Children's Express will also be reporting from the debate, which will take place at County Hall, Durham from 11am to 2pm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT KIRSTY BEESTON ON 0191 384 9745

Listening to the Unheard

Want to know how young people in the UK feel about their lives and prospects, politics and Europe? Then this report by the British Youth Council, commissioned by the European Union, is for you.

Listening to the Unheard is the result of a National Youth Consultation held in the summer of 2000 – the **largest ever survey of young people** in the UK. Over 200,000 questionnaires were distributed to a variety of young people aged 15-25, and a consultative conference was also held. The report contains the survey results as well as the views and needs of young people in areas such as education and training, employment, lifestyle, having your say and Europe. Its findings have contributed to the British submission for the EU White Paper on Youth Policy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ORDER A COPY OF THE REPORT CALL 020 7422 8644
OR VISIT www.byc.org.uk

Use **rightangle** to **share news** about your own work or issues that affect young people's rights! **Feedback** on **rightangle**, **ideas** for future themes or articles, and **examples** of good activities and resources are also very welcome. Contributors get a **free pack** of Youth Education Programme materials.

ction relevant to young people's rights around the world

help **stamp out** torture

As you read this, thousands of people are being tortured in countries all around the world. That's why Amnesty International's worldwide campaign to end the use of torture is crucial.

Torture is banned by international agreements, but it still continues – often in secret. Most victims are tortured because of what they believe in or even who they are – not just for information. Young people can **play a key part** in helping to end torture by demanding that the torturers are brought to justice and that the international trade in torture equipment is stamped out.

TO FIND OUT HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN JOIN THE CAMPAIGN, WHICH WILL RUN UNTIL CHRISTMAS 2001, CALL 020 7417 6360, E-MAIL student@amnesty.org.uk OR VISIT www.amnesty.org.uk

World Youth Millennium Awards

This exchange programme gives 17–25-year-olds the chance to make a real difference to community projects in the UK and overseas. Participants get **a unique opportunity** to live and work with another young person from a developing country for six months, spending three months in the UK and another three overseas. Supported by VSO and the Prince's Trust, and funded by the Millennium Commission, the scheme covers everything from medical costs, training and travel to visas, food and accommodation, and a basic allowance. The organisers also offer advice and support to help award winners raise £500 from their local community before the programme starts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND AN APPLICATION PACK CALL 020 8780 7500 OR E-MAIL enquiry@vso.org.uk

young people's films challenge adults to **think again**

As part of their media work programme "Hyped", Soft Touch Arts Co-op in Leicester has worked with socially excluded groups of young people to produce five hard-hitting, professional, 30-second films which **communicate their views** about suicide among young gay people, the failure of the youth justice system, racism, debates about violence in the media and young women's safety. Designed to provoke discussion among adults, the films would also appeal to a youth audience and will be showing at selected national cinemas in early summer.

TO VIEW THE FILMS VISIT www.soft-touch.org.uk E-MAIL hyped@soft-touch.org.uk OR CALL 0116 270 2706 FOR MORE INFORMATION



The deadline for the next edition of **rightangle** is 1 August 2001 (150 words max).

E-mail yep@scfuk.org.uk or write to The Editor, **rightangle**,

Education Unit, Save the Children, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD

what's new?



Challenging transitions

Young people's views and experiences of growing up

This study, carried out by Save the Children between 1998 and 2000, focuses on young people seen as having taken on responsibilities beyond their years – teenage mothers, care leavers, young workers and those participating in youth organisations – and explores their views and experiences of the transition from “childhood” to “adulthood”, especially in relation to skills gained, support received and future aspirations.

**To order call 01752 202301 or
e-mail orders@plymbridge.com
Price £7.50 plus p&p**



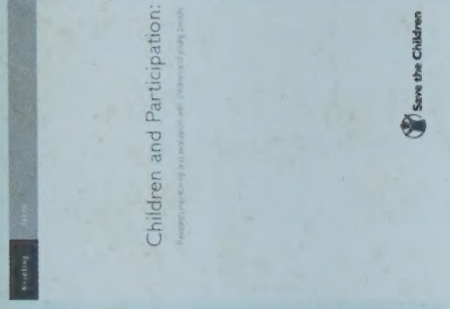
Two new introsheets on asylum-seekers and globalisation

Free guides aimed at increasing young people's understanding of current issues

Introsheets provide a straightforward introduction to a range of international children's rights issues. The two latest focus on what it means to be an asylum-seeker and on the meaning of globalisation, especially in relation to children and young people's lives around the world.

Other themes covered include refugees, child labour, how Save the Children works, disability, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, emergencies, child soldiers, debt, the private sector and HIV/AIDS.

**To order call 020 7716 2369
or e-mail yep@scfuk.org.uk**



Children and participation

Research, monitoring and evaluation with children and young people

This guide, produced by Save the Children, will be particularly relevant to practitioners wishing to include children and young people in research projects and in monitoring and evaluating their on-going work. It features sections on good practice and ethics, methods and tools, training young researchers, involving young people in monitoring and evaluation and a detailed bibliography for sources of more information.

**To order free copies
e-mail dialogue@scfuk.org.uk
or call 020 7703 5400 ext. 2565**